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AUTHOR Chambers, Patrick
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ABSTRACT

The innovative use of a visual cueing device, or rods, in a second language class to represent the parts of speech and the grammatical structure of a sentence is explained and illustrated. The advantages found in it are that individual structures are not learned as isolated elements but rather as parts of a larger system, and that there is more student-generated production because the technique allows the teacher to use few verbal cues. The use of the technique for teaching the verb "to be" is described and charted, as well as its use for illustrating clauses. (MSE)

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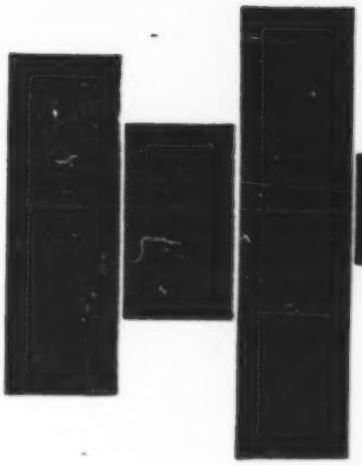
# Using the RODS



# for Structured Grammar

Patrick Chambers

PRESENTED AT TRI TESOL 1985

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The rods have been used in ESL teaching for a number of years. Most approaches have used the descriptive nature of the rods, (i.e. THE SILENT WAY.) In the structured approach outlined here, the only necessary function of the various colors and length of rods is in their representation of different parts of speech. This structured approach is, then, a visual cueing device for the grammar of the sentence.

Why is such an approach necessary? The answer to this question may lie in the inability of many students to correlate the similarities of seemingly diverse structures into a pattern that exists in the language. The tendency seems to be that each individual structure is learned as if it were an isolated element rather than as one "spoke of the wheel" as it is.

The greatest additional benefit from using the rods is that being an entirely visual cueing device, it allows the teacher to use few, if any, verbal cues thus giving more student generated production and less "teacher talk."

In beginning to work with the rods, one important thing to remember is to make the system comfortable for you. It is not necessary to use any specific rod to represent any specific thing, which is to say that if the colors of the rods used here don't match your preferences, change them.

The system I've found most effective is starting with the verb "to be" in the present tense using the smallest white rod. It is important, at this first point, to be sure the student understands that the rod represents am, is, and are, not just one specific word.

I use the short purple rod for a subject. In the horizontal position it represents a noun, in the vertical the corresponding pronoun. If an article is needed with the noun, it should be implied rather than using a separate rod. This helps teach the concept that nouns often require articles as an integral part

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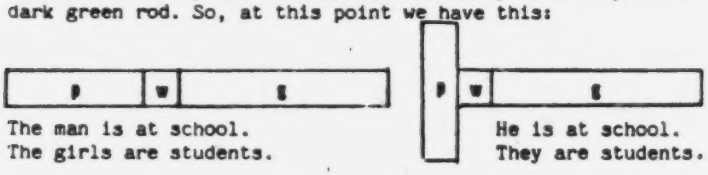
of their use. Any rod can be used initially as a compliment. I use the longer dark green rod. So, at this point we have this:

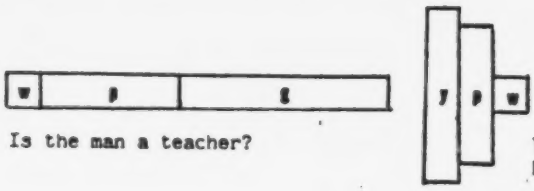


The man is at school.
The girls are students.

He is at school.
They are students.

It is important to use several sentences to insure the students realize the rods represent parts of the sentence rather than individual words. They should be able to give you many variations.

The next step is to introduce a rod to mean "yes/no" I use the yellow rod in the vertical position. It is now easy to invert the subject and verb in the original sentence to make a question, and add the answering sentence.



Is the man a teacher?

Yes, he is.
No, he isn't. (negative implied)

After returning to the original sentence, the inversion can be done for many of the previous sentences supplied by the students. Depending of the level of the students, this may be enough for the first lesson. One added variation of the structure if appropriate is to add tag questions at this point. I use a hand cue for positive and negative forms of the verb.

Key

| | |
|---|---|
| w | white |
| r | red |
| L | light green |
| p | purple |
| y | yellow |
| g | green |
| bk | black |
| bn | brown |
| bl | blue |
| o | orange |

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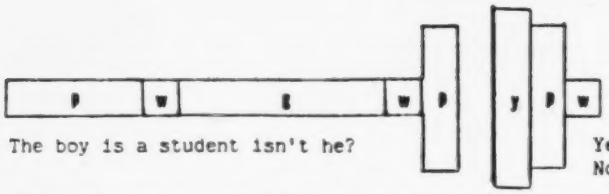
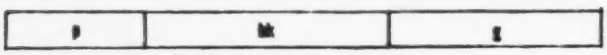


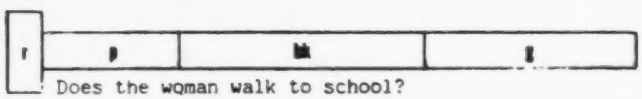
The boy is a student isn't he?

Yes, he is.
No, he isn't.

The next step is using any action verb. For this I use the black rod.



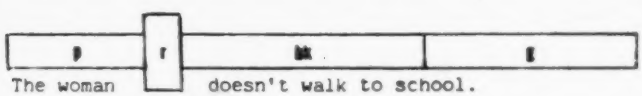
The woman walks to school.



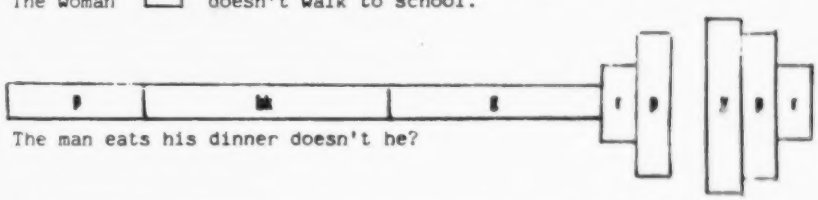
Does the woman walk to school?

For the question form introduce the verb "do/does" with a vertical red rod.

Yes, she does.
No, she doesn't.



The woman doesn't walk to school.

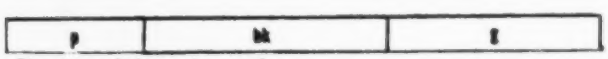


The man eats his dinner doesn't he?

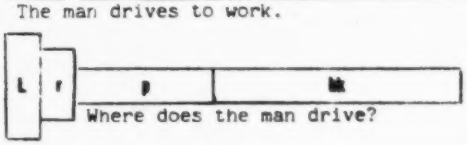
Yes, he does
No, he doesn't.

It is easy to emphasize here that the "s" on does comes from the "walks." It is important to use both singular and plural subjects to indicate how the verbs change to agree. If you have previously taught tag questions, you can now add action verbs and "do/does."

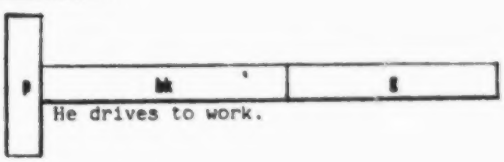
Question words... What, How, When, Where



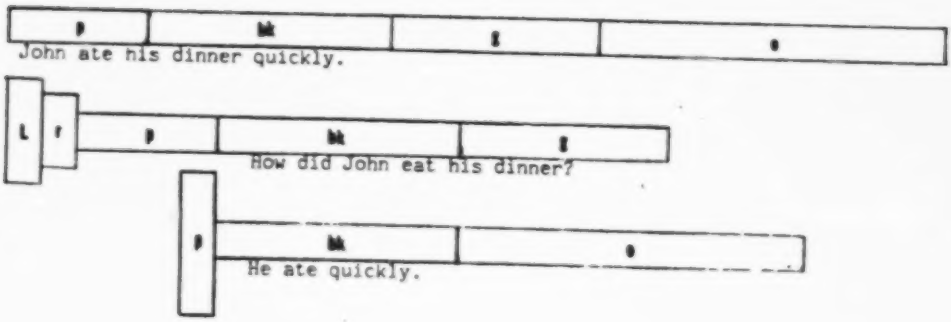
The man drives to work.



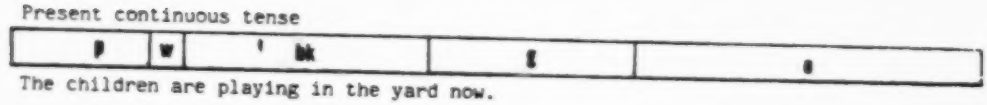
Where does the man drive?

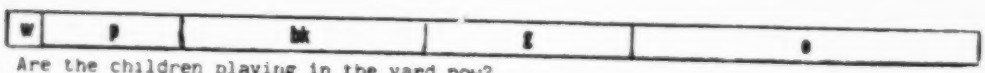


He drives to work.



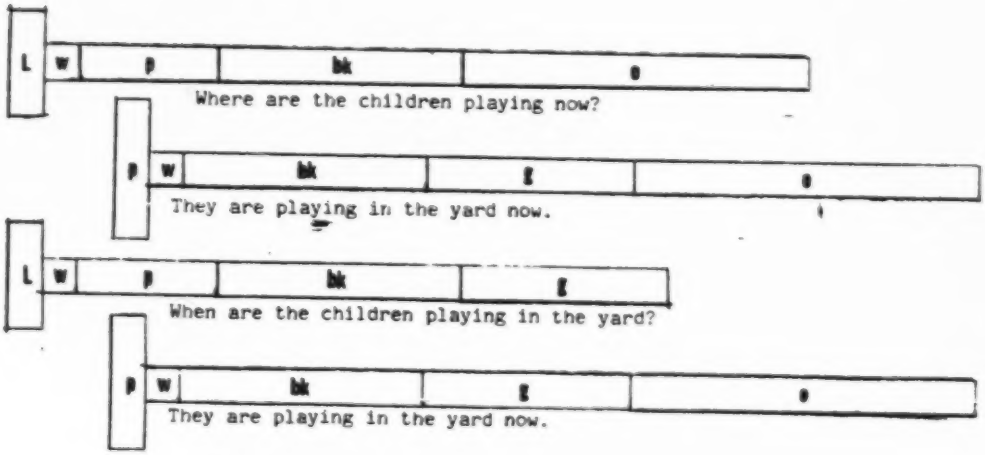

Present continuous tense




Yes, they are.
No, they aren't.




Where are the children playing now?
They are playing in the yard now.
When are the children playing in the yard?
They are playing in the yard now.



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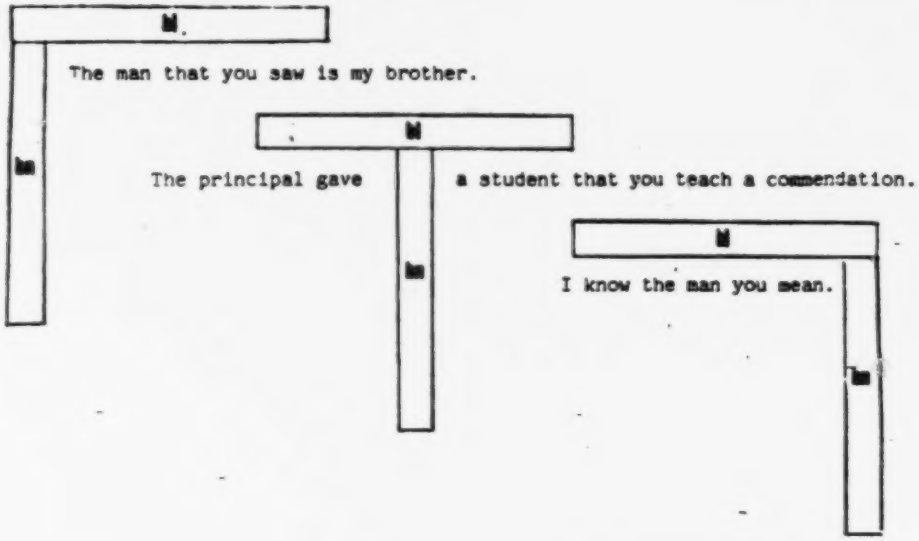
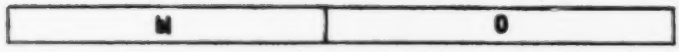
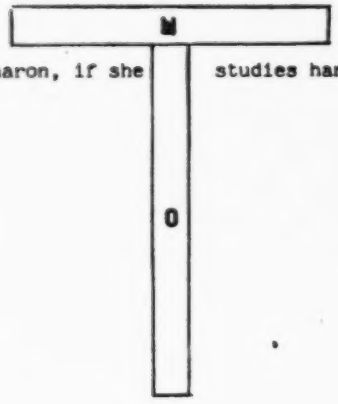
Clauses.... Relative, Dependent/Independent



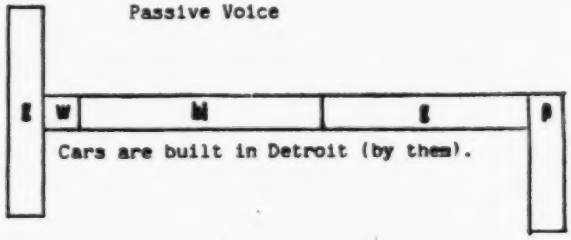
I would have arrived sooner, if the weather hadn't been so bad.

When he arrived at the party, he found that the food was gone.



Sharon, if she studies hard, could excel in engineering.

Passive Voice



Cars are built in Detroit (by them).